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## THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

BY NORMAN E. MACK, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL  
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AN article on "The Return of Roosevelt," written at the request of the editor of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, entails a certain delicacy of position on my part, owing to my present office as National Chairman of the great party to which Colonel Roosevelt is antagonistic. I would not be justified in writing at all on the subject proposed except in its purely political bearings. It will be treated here from the political view-point solely, and in nothing that shall be said has the writer the remotest wish or intention to personally offer any discourtesy either to former President Roosevelt or his equally eminent successor in the Presidential office.

It is fitting to tender Colonel Roosevelt congratulations upon his safe return from his African journey. I am glad his health has been preserved—glad that "not a lion did his duty." Gratification that a distinguished citizen has escaped the perils of an itinerary of unusual character, and in many respects fraught with dangers, is a feeling all should share. It is equally pertinent to express a hope that Colonel Roosevelt may also win free of the perils of European adulation which beset him at the moment of this writing. They are as dangerous to manliness, to Americanism, to mental and moral poise, as the fevers of the African jungle are to life. Their menace is subtler than malaria. The intellectual sleeping-sickness they have been known to induce is as bad for the mind as the bite of the tsetse fly is for the body.

The possibilities incident to Colonel Roosevelt's return to this country may be divided into their immediate and remote aspects. If the former President were to do what the ultra-strenuous wing of the Back-from-Elba Club seems to expect him to do, he would forthwith take the helm of the Taft Administration.

I put that proposition bluntly. Its grotesqueness can be shown in no other way so palpably as by stripping it of all extrinsic rhetoric and reducing it to its ultimate essential—that which the alchemists of the Middle Ages called the Absolute.

That the Roosevelt presence will in a more or less marked degree react on President Taft and his policies is one of the probabilities of the case which must candidly be recognized. The circumstances under which Mr. Taft received the nomination at Chicago, and the conditions of the campaign that followed, are so accurately known as to be incapable of being misinterpreted either by hostile criticism or friendly extenuation. Impartial judgment has no course left open but to acknowledge that the Taft nomination was a Roosevelt legacy. It constituted an innovation up to that time unheard of in American politics—the principle of hereditary succession to the Presidential office. It was this which affixed to Mr. Taft and his campaign the “proxy” stigma. It is this which is responsible for the fact that Mr. Taft, nominated through Roosevelt, supported by Roosevelt and pledged to the Roosevelt policies, entered upon an administration inaugurated less under its own auspices and compromised more by the rule that had preceded it than any other administration in American history.

But tacit recognition of these facts, both by President Taft and former President Roosevelt, and the actual utilization of them which is indisputable as regards each, is a distinct matter from their formal, overt ratification by either. There is a technical, though not ethical, difference between availing oneself of a bad policy and deliberate affixing one’s hand and seal to it. Civic conscience should have prevented the former. But ordinary political astuteness ought to head off the latter. Whether it will or not remains to be seen.

Should Colonel Roosevelt force himself into the Taft Administration—should he seek open acclamation as the power behind the throne—he would unequivocally declare to the American people and the Republican party that in Mr. Taft he had imposed on them a mere substitute. Should President Taft permit him to do so, he would admit his nomination, his election, his course since he has occupied the White House to be worthless counters on the table of national politics.

Yet the radical admirers of Roosevelt demand this very thing.

Some who pass as well-wishers of President Taft regard it with an indifference altogether surprising. Such pay a poor compliment either to Colonel Roosevelt or President Taft. What some insist on and others supinely anticipate ought to be unthinkable. The viciousness of the seed sown by the controlling influence of an outgoing President in the choice of his successor receives ominous confirmation in this strange aftermath of the Chicago Convention and the Republican campaign of 1908.

In my own opinion, the immediate problem likely to confront the Administration, through the home-coming of Roosevelt, may be less sensational, but fully as insidious, as that which the Back-from-Elba contingent propounds. Obligations are powerful. Mr. Taft is under unparalleled obligations to Roosevelt. He is not only indebted, but he must ask still further favors. Never was debtor or suppliant a free man.

When Colonel Roosevelt again sets foot in this country, he will gaze down a vista of ravage, wreck and disruption in the Republican party which will make him look back with envy to the colossal immutability of the Pyramids, and will cause the ruins of the Forum to assume in his memory the aspect of a cheerful promenade. The Fourteenth Congressional District of Massachusetts and the Thirty-second Congressional District of New York annihilating the distance between Boston and Rochester by their hand-clasp of alliance against the high cost of living, tariff and trusts; the phenomenal majority of Dickinson in the Sixth District of Missouri forming the middle abutment of the bridge whose Eastern pier rises from the waters of the Atlantic and whose Western arch will be reared at the Golden Gate; the epoch-making insurrection against Cannonism in the House; the Aldriches and Hales preparing their retreat from the Senate; Republican anarchy in Ohio; Republican infamy and panic in New York; repudiation of the Payne-Aldrich tariff by the Republican State Convention of Indiana; insurgency representing the only rally of vital forces to any part of the Republican organism—it is needless to draw more than the outlines of a general situation familiar to all. Let us choose for analysis the problem at this moment most specifically associated with the return of Colonel Roosevelt—that of conditions in the State of New York—conditions that have been steadily developing through all these months of graft and bribery exposures and insurance scandals,

a situation lately sharply accentuated by the intended candidacy of Senator Depew for re-election and now brought to an acute crisis by the withdrawal of Governor Hughes from politics, thus depriving Empire State Republicans of their last asset.

Already the plan is agitated to fall back upon Roosevelt as a last resort to try to retrieve the political bankruptcy of the Republican party in New York—to offer him the support of the National and State Republican organizations for the United State Senatorship—to tender him the gubernatorial nomination if he wishes that instead—indeed, to promise him anything he wants, provided he will act as receiver for insolvent Republicanism in his home State.

To do that and successfully to do it is beyond the power of Colonel Roosevelt or any other man. Yet Roosevelt may undertake the task. And should he do so—should he in the specific case of New York or in the national field aggressively attempt to sustain the hands of the Administration—he would be other than Roosevelt did he not expect to wield in return a potent, not to say a dominant, influence in the White House and with the party leaders. It is this contingency—a contingency of emergency efforts for a party in dire stress, and of compensation for these efforts in the shape of preferred official party honors or of unofficial party dictation, which appears to me likely to constitute the nucleus of the relations of Theodore Roosevelt to the Republican situation upon his arrival in this country—that is, if he shall become a factor in that situation at all.

But there is a larger aspect of the return of Roosevelt which, in the opinion of not a few, calls for examination. This aspect is also the one most removed in point of time. Is there a likelihood that Theodore Roosevelt will be renominated for the Presidency in 1912? On that only a prophet can lift the curtain of the future. But it does not need a prophet to carry conviction, first, that such nomination would be a blunder without parallel; second, that no matter with what *éclat* it might be affirmed by a national convention, it would not reflect the saner sense of the Republican rank and file; and, third, that were Roosevelt to seek and obtain another Presidential nomination, he could not be elected.

The national election of 1912 will be more a battle of principles and less a battle of individualities than any similar con-

flict that has taken place in the United States. A Roosevelt candidacy would be a candidacy of individualism purely. Aside from the appeal of the Roosevelt personality—an emotional appeal to a public which on civic issues is essentially unemotional—what would such a candidacy have to offer? The Roosevelt policies? For seven years they were tried under Roosevelt and then they were given a fresh lease of power. Whether President Taft has maintained these policies is quite foreign to the substance of this argument. If he has not, then he has been inconsistent with the pledges under which his campaign was conducted. If he has, then the failure of his Administration is a sufficient comment on its propaganda. But in any event the Roosevelt policies are a burst bubble. They are an experiment which has been tried and found wanting. This is demonstrated not only by the omissions and commissions during Mr. Roosevelt's terms, but by what has happened since he left the White House and is connected by indissoluble links with his incumbency of the Presidential office.

Tariff revision in favor of special privilege, which has affixed an indelible stain on Mr. Taft's Administration at the very outset, is nothing but the logical sequel to the utter indifference to tariff revision of any kind which disfigured Mr. Roosevelt's seven years of opportunity. The sugar scandal, known to Roosevelt's Administration and disregarded by it; the Cortelyou corporation campaign-fund abomination; the Harriman incident; the Paul Morton episode; the failure effectively to prosecute the Beef Trust; the lapse of punitory efficiency with regard to the Alaskan land-grabbers, prodigality for which we must go back to the expenditures of the most gigantic war of modern times to find any arithmetic of comparison; collapse of any suggested aggressiveness against the criminal trusts and utilization of those trusts for political purposes—these are only a few of the spectres which would dog the footsteps of Mr. Roosevelt from the instant he might definitely seek again to become a dominant factor in national affairs. A vast amount has developed since Mr. Roosevelt went abroad. What was only partially understood at the close of his second term is now fully comprehended. His two administrations are reduced to their actual level, as administrations which with unequalled opportunities for achievement accomplished little at a time when accomplishment was most needed.

Discredited as to doctrine and record, Rooseveltism, so far as it exists now, is narrowed to the bare question of expediency. What standing has it from that view-point? Its sole foothold is the unstable bog of substitution of individualism for issues. Before it rises the impassable barrier of a century and a quarter of national repugnance to the Third Term idea—a repugnance so vehement, so just and so confirmed by accumulated precedent that it has become established as an American institution. To that precedent Mr. Roosevelt himself has formally subscribed, by his declaration immediately after the election of 1904, that he would not again be a candidate for the Presidency.

The reception accorded former President Roosevelt in Europe has elicited a number of laudatory comparisons with the honors bestowed on General Grant during his tour around the globe. The amusement of this species of parallel-drawing is quite harmless and may even be commendable up to the point when it is sought to inject into it a political significance. There it ceases to be legitimate. But to those who seek to read into the foreign courtesies paid to an ex-President of the United States a meaning which does not attach to them, let it be said that even meeting them on their own ground their parallel is far from perfect.

After General Grant returned from abroad, the problem of his political future was not complicated by any such subsidiary process as the proposal to bring Roosevelt to the rescue of the irremediable and the retrieval of the irretrievable in the State of New York. It was not involved in any such preliminary paradox as the supposition of installing the head of a past and gone administration as unofficial Prime Minister to an administration in power. The issue was reduced to two plain propositions: "Shall the Republican party give Grant another nomination?" and, "Shall the Third Term idea receive the sanction of a deliberately adopted precedent?" That was the grand crisis of the Third Term propaganda in this nation. General Grant was not handicapped by any scruples against accepting a third term. Colonel Roosevelt has, with the world as witness, professed such scruples. National antagonism to a Presidential third term was then by no means universal. Now it is practically so. The accumulation of precedent against the idea was far from being so massive—inexpugnable—as it is to-day. Yet with the conditions infinitely simpler than they are now, with everything more fa-

vorable to the exponents of the Third Term doctrine than ever before or since, the phalanx which supported Grant in the Republican National Convention of 1880 went down like the last square of the Old Guard on the field of Waterloo and Garfield was nominated.

From that day to this the Third Term, as a principle, a concession or a practicality, has been a corpse in its cerements. It cannot live—it can only be galvanized. Can anything more vividly illustrate the plight of the Republican party in this year of grace 1910 than that elements in that party—elements indefinite in extent, yet certainly appreciable—are demanding that the Third Term *caput mortuum* be dragged from its shroud and the battery be applied? The party which goes to the sepulchre of a slain fallacy for help is itself moribund.

Thus, from whatever angle we look at it, the construction put upon the return of Roosevelt by those who insist on regarding it not as a fact, but a factor, amounts to an attempted application of inadequate means to impossible ends. His interpolation into the politics of the State of New York will be nothing less than confession that the Republican party, its array shattered, its record disgraced, with neither prospect of success nor promise of reform, thrusts an individual into the breach, relying on the dictatorial will and the personal magnetism of a single man to make the electorate forget the monumental abuses of fraud, graft, bribery, machine rule and legislative prostitution by which it has been victimized. His overt or tacit acceptance as the guiding hand of the Taft Administration is to paint in heraldic blazonry the truth that that administration is too weak to stand alone. His nomination for the Presidency in 1912 would be repetition on a national scale of the emotionalism and the individualism with which his entry into New York politics, whether as State leader, Senatorial candidate or Gubernatorial nominee, would seek to supply the default of issues. It would have a meaning of deeper and more dangerous import even than that, for it would be the apotheosis of one-man power in a great party, and the standard under which the Republican party would go to battle would flaunt the legend that what the American people need is not a President, but a master.

To avoid any pretext for misapprehension, it is proper here to state that in nothing said in this article am I assuming what



response Colonel Roosevelt will make, when he comes back to this country, to those who for personal ends or party purposes stand ready to exploit him. I recognize as clearly as any man can that Colonel Roosevelt has not declared himself, and that his receptiveness or non-receptiveness of what is being mapped out for him in certain quarters still remains an unknown term in the great equation of events. But facts already history, conclusions inevitable as soon as the premises of what is being prepared for Colonel Roosevelt are granted, speak for themselves, and as they are incapable of being misunderstood they need neither explanation nor reservation.

But eliminating both the past and the future from our survey, the grand lesson conveyed by the present moment in its relation to Roosevelt is its demonstration of the straits to which the Republican party is reduced. Desperate is the condition of a party when elements so considerable as those which are relying on Roosevelt and Roosevelt only feel that they can depend neither on party record, party pledges nor party doctrine, but can find hope only in the individuality of a man.

NORMAN E. MACK.